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SOURCE Koelnische RundschauIMPRESSIONS OF LIVING CONDITIONS IN DAIREN, CHINA

[Comment: This report gives information from an article in the Cologne daily Koelnische Rundschau by Helmut Kerstan of Hamburg. No further identification was given of the author or on his sources, but from the context of the article, the author seems to have been on a ship that called at Dairen.]

It is difficult to get into Dairen -- much more difficult than to get into the rest of Red China, which would be difficult enough. The harbor of Dairen is deserted most of the time. Only at the time of the soybean and corn harvests, large freighters from all over the world, sailing mostly under Panamanian register, call there. The controls could not be more strict in a country at war. Ships are carefully checked for spies, and all crew members are thoroughly searched. Radios, cameras, money, and valuables are put under seal. The ships are hermetically sealed from contact with the outside. They are guarded by Chinese soldiers wearing miserable uniforms and cloth shoes. However, these soldiers are brutal and are quick to use their rifle butts. This cordon can be broken through only very rarely.

At night, the blast furnaces light up the bay and all the factories are lighted. The whole city seems to consist only of factories which work day and night. Work under the most difficult conditions appears to be the only slogan of the city, with everything else pushed into the background. Normal life no longer exists.

It is the more surprising to find, in this drab picture, well-dressed civilians and elegant women who would not look out of place on a Paris boulevard, neatly dressed children with nurses, and luxury cars splashing through the muddy streets at high speed. These people are members of the Russian "colony," which has a tremendous administrative apparatus, and which is represented in all kinds of offices of the harbor administration, of the factories, and of the shipyards. These Russian experts, economic advisers, engineers, officers, and officials have taken over the neat single family houses and villas on the well-kept streets in the hills above the city -- the section that was developed in the days of Japanese control.

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The slogan "new country" keeps recurring in conversations. Not all people seem to be enthusiastic about the difficult transition phase to this "new country," least of all the coolies who have to work harder than ever.

No officials are even seen alone. Even the harbor physician and the ship's pilot on the bridge are always shadowed by several colleagues. Mutual checking-up, deepest distrust, purges in the Communist manner, and an oppressive administrative and economic bureaucracy poison the atmosphere. Open conversations can seldom be carried on.

Names and firm designations have disappeared. Factories, government and business offices, and enterprises are designated by numbers. No 8 is the police headquarters, No 15 the railroad station, and No 20 the shipping agency. Whatever signs there are still left are in Chinese and in Russian, no longer in English. The hatred of foreigners, always widespread in China, is not exhibited toward the Russians.

State and party propaganda organs seem to be very active. The government and party officials are the most loyal adherents and at the same time the chief beneficiaries of the regime. Nevertheless, the population seems to have very little interest in public affairs. The people appear indifferent, even apathetic, and not even the events in neighboring Korea create much of a stir. It is difficult to tell whether Asiatic stoicism or meek acceptance of fate is the reason for this attitude, because, after all, there has always been war throughout the thousands of years of Chinese history.

At any rate, the political climate differs considerably from that of the other Communist countries. The public and the political apparatus run successfully, but in the Chinese manner, and that is the reason that one does not have the impression of being in one of the usual standard-model satellite countries.

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